

10/9/2024

Greetings!

Breakfast that morning was pretty well attended. I had arrived two days late to a conference in Kuala Lumpur because of an irregularity with my passport which, thankfully, was resolved. So there at breakfast, I sat at a table with a middle-aged couple from a country where Christians are heavily persecuted. In fact, there were eight people from that country in attendance at the event.

The conference was an international one, sponsored by ISAAC (International Substance Abuse and Addictions Coalition). ISAAC has 980 members from 107 countries on six continents. Representatives from all six of those continents were in attendance. At the moment, I am the acting President of ISAAC, which is more or less a figurehead position. I find it both a privilege and an encouragement to be involved with these rehabilitation programs, most of which are outside of our Teen Challenge networks.

Well, back to breakfast. As the above-mentioned couple began to share a bit of their story and ministry I found myself experiencing several emotions. First, a deep sense of grief darkened my thinking as I heard that in their country Christians are the poorest of the poor. This is because they are not permitted to hold good jobs, they are refused entry into any institutions of higher education, and all efforts they might make to register a business is generally fruitless—unless of course they can pay a big bribe. Many Christians are also imprisoned on bogus charges where they can experience unspeakable horrors. Yet, there they sat with smiles on their faces as a deep sense of peace and joy reflected from their countenances.

Second, I was overwhelmed with a deep sense of respect—even awe. This couple has worked for years, in the presence of intense persecution, with the addicted in their country. They consider this brief life on earth as only a stepping stone into the eternal presence of a gracious and compassionate God. Their story caused me to examine my own story. Could I do the same as they are doing? Could I face the intense persecution and keep fulfilling God's call? Their prayers are more like, "Keep us faithful, Lord!" rather than, "Lord, protect us!" It was a truly humbling experience.

Third and last, I felt my attitude rise to a new level of gratefulness to God. He is at work through tens of thousands of faithful servants throughout the world. His Kingdom is advancing in spite of difficulties and persecution, and in spite of lofty arguments that raise themselves up against the knowledge of God. I found myself saying, "God, thank you for your calling and for the great cloud of witnesses you have called to serve you in this messed up world." There is hope for the world.

Speaking of gratefulness, we are so grateful to all of you who have stood with us in finances and prayers all of these 40 plus years. We pray God's richest blessings on all of you. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Gratefully,

Tom Bremer